



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10**

1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
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OFFICE OF
ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUP

June 18, 2010

Ms. Pamela K. Miller
Executive Director
Alaska Community Action on Toxics
505 West Northern Lights Boulevard, Suite 205
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Ms. Miller:

This letter acknowledges receipt of the May 21, 2010 petition from the Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT) to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 10 requesting a Preliminary Assessment (PA) be conducted at the Flint Hills Resources' North Pole Refinery, located at 1150 H and H Lane, North Pole, Alaska. Dennis McLerran, EPA Region 10's Regional Administrator, has referred your request to my office for response.

Our records show that EPA conducted a PA at the refinery in 1986 when the facility was owned by MAPCO. At that point in time, EPA determined that EPA's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) program was more suitable to address the site. Therefore, the site was referred to the RCRA program. In more recent years, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) has been active in following up on environmental and public health concerns related to the facility.

We understand your concerns to be the identification of sulfolane in North Pole residents' drinking water sources and other potential impacts to public health from past activities from the refinery. Although a PA has already been conducted at this site, the discovery of sulfolane is new information that was not taken into account during the previous PA. Therefore, Region 10's Superfund program will conduct an updated PA and complete a report documenting the results before November 2010. We will keep you informed if there is any change in this schedule.

Within the PA petition letter, ACAT states that "the state agencies have not taken proper actions to assess exposure pathways/health outcomes and ensure protection of environmental and human health." ADEC had been keeping EPA informed of response actions initiated to address the off-site sulfolane contamination. Based on our interactions with ADEC staff and senior leadership, I understand that response actions to address site risks have been ongoing since November and that other activities are being evaluated. I encourage you to engage directly with the ADEC and the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services to insure you are fully apprised of the most current information related to actions that have been taken and are planned to address contamination at and near the site. As we proceed with the PA, EPA will maintain communications with the state to stay abreast of continued progress at the site.



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Should you have any questions about the PA process, please do not hesitate to contact Brandon Perkins of my staff at (206) 553-6396, or by email at perkins.brandon@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



Daniel D. Opalski, Director
Office of Environmental Cleanup

cc: Larry Dietrick, Director
Division of Spill Prevention and Response

Steve Bainbridge, Manager
Contaminated Sites Program

Ann Farris, Project Manager
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

Lori Verbrugge, Program Manager
Alaska Department of Health and Social Services